

ON ROMAN BUILDINGS AND OTHER ANTIQUITIES IN A DISTRICT OF N.W. HANTS.

BY THE REV. G. H. ENGLEHEART, F.S.A.

Nowhere, perhaps, in England is there a thicker cluster of houses of the Roman period than round my old home in Appleshaw on the N.W. Hampshire border. From the rising ground of my garden at nightfall, say 350 A.D., the smoke from eight or nine ascertained sites might have been visible:

"Et jam summa procul villarum culmina fumant," all within the narrow compass of an almost exact semi-circle of a two-and-a-quarter miles radius. If on a half-inch map a circle of an inch-and-a-half radius is drawn round the hamlet of Penton Grafton, just N. of Weyhill, all these sites will be found in its Western half, and the closeness of their congregation will be apparent. The localities are Clanville, Shoddessen, Thruxton, Abbot's Ann, Biddesden and four unnamed. With the exception of the little Clanville house, I had no facilities for thorough exploration or re-exploration, and these notes are meant to indicate a field for workers rather than work accomplished.

1. Clanville. Excavated in 1897 with help given by the Society of Antiquaries and locally, and fully recorded with plan in *Archæologia* LVI. Noteworthy for an inscribed stone M. AVR. KARINO. N. CAES., the only inscription to Carinus as yet found in Britain. The stone is now in the Winchester Museum. The E. wing, apparently of offices or farm buildings, lay under pasture and could not be completely examined.

2. Shoddessen. A trench or two dug by myself single-handed beneath surface débris exposed walls and a small room paved with mortar or concrete, but no thorough investigation has been made.

3. Thruxton. The evidence as to the character of this building is curiously contradictory. The well-known pavement, inscribed along its upper border Q. NATALIS NATALINVS ET BODENI, was unearthed in 1823. Seventy years afterwards the memory of the spot had been entirely lost, and it was only by probing over a wide area that I rediscovered the pavement and helped to secure it for the British Museum, where it now is. I was puzzled to find no sign of other rooms or of walls, though trenching was done for a long way round. Later, I came across a statement of Sir R. Colt Hoare in 1817 (*Archæologia* XXII. 49) that "on digging all around the pavement no foundations of other adjacent buildings were found, nor any of the other concomitants." He adds, however, that five skeletons were found on the N. side.

But in the Salisbury Volume of the Archæological Institute, 1849, p. 241, Dr. Ingram, President of Trinity College, Oxford, wrote: " It appears then that the whole building, of which the tessellated pavement formed a part, was in length 85 feet and in width 50 feet." He describes a chalk floor in which were set two rows of large stones, smooth on their upper surface, five in a row, 13 feet apart, the rows 21 feet apart. It should be noted that these measurements are *precisely* those of two rows of pillar-bases unearthed at Clanville.

I was constantly told by old folk in Thruxton that "golden gates" had been found on the site. This sounds like large objects of gilded bronze. Two silver rings, one inscribed with the CHI RHO, were preserved in the family of the 1823 tenant.

4. A communication made to Hoare in 1824 by the Rev. A. B. Hutchins [Hoare, *Modern South Wilts* V. 210] says: "About 50 years since a plowman of the name of Burrows discovered in a field a small distance from this pavement two leaden vessels full of gold and silver coins. The horse put his foot upon the mouth of one of the vessels, by which it was discovered. The said plowman, upon the strength of this money, commenced a carrier and died a few years since worth £1,500 About a few fields from this treasure my relation, the late Dr. Sheppard of Amport, Hants, built a house close to the turnpike road leading to Amesbury and which you must pass in your way to the Thruxton pavement. In digging for chalk his labourers discovered twelve vessels (three of which I have in my possession, one of them of Samian pottery), and came to some stone foundations, on the floor of which was a tessellated pavement. The colours were various, but no particular figure was to be seen The distance from the two pavements is rather more than a mile, and the spot where the leaden vessels were found is exactly between the two former."

Neither these somewhat cryptic directions nor inquiry enabled me to find this pavement, which certainly exists for some pertinacious seeker.

5. On the Andover-Devizes road, one mile from Weyhill Church, is a five-ways junction. Some 300 yards beyond this on the same line of road, in a field on the right of one going N.W., is a much-obliterated villa-site close to the road, and extending under it. Here, in 1897, I found the large deposit of over 30 Roman pewter vessels described and figured in *Archæologia* Vol. LVI., and now in the British Museum.

With no desire to press the possibility unduly, I will here say of two of these, a cup and a patera with the Chi Rho scratched on its under surface, that, had they been taken say from a tomb in one of our Cathedrals, from their form no question would have arisen of their being anything but Chalice and Paten. If, as is not inconceivable, they were earmarked from his table service for use in "the church in the house of Victricius" (whose name

is scratched on another vessel), they are by some centuries the earliest Eucharistic vessels discovered in Britain.

About 80 yards N. of the house proper a completely detached bath-house of excellent construction was excavated and carefully covered in again. The pavement of the hot-air room had been worked in unusually small coloured tesserae of $\frac{3}{8}$ inch cube, of which only a handful remained. There is little doubt that this is the field in which the above-mentioned find of coins was made (4), for a tradition was still current in Appleshaw in my time that a labourer had found there *something* which enabled him to "do no more work." The two "lead" vessels were possibly a part of the pewter set.

6. Abbots Ann. Of this important villa, opened by the Hon. and Rev. Samuel Best about 1850, I have been unable to obtain any detailed account or plan. Surface indications may still be seen in the "Minster Field," formerly possessed by Hyde Abbey from the will of Edward the Elder. Three portions of tessellation are in the British Museum. The coins began unusually early, from A.D. 37 downwards. It is said, I do not know with what truth, that the leaden piping, taps, etc., of the water-supply were found intact and sold for old metal.

7. A site not far from the last and containing a pavement with the design of a *biga*. An informant, A, told me that an ancient retired schoolmaster of Thruxton, B, while watching the Abbots Ann excavators, had heard the "oldest inhabitant," C, say: "That pavement's nothing to the one Squire Errington found over yonder (pointing): it had a coach and a pair of galloping horses on it. Squire wouldn't have it meddled with and covered it up again." C was long dead, and on going at once to ascertain from B the direction in which C had pointed, I found that B had died the previous day. Mr. Errington lived at Red Rice, a mile S. of Abbots Ann. The pavement eluded my search, but surely exists, perhaps between the two places.

8. Biddesden. Owing to a mistake made by Hoare (*Archæologia* XXII. 52) and perpetuated, this site has been transferred to the adjoining estate of Redenham. It was partly excavated by Sir John Pollen of Redenham in 1830 and afterwards, in 1850, by Sir John Boileau. The accounts are imperfect and confused, but it appears that the country-folk were allowed to entirely destroy the remains. Twenty years ago I could find fragments of coloured pavements (not only white, as stated by Hoare) under the turf. The foundations of a large oblong separate building, the *fructuaria* of the house, were traced by Lt.-Col. Hawley and myself in 1898. A steep and narrow lane, climbing up southwards from Biddesden Park gates to the site, has solid flint paving, which perhaps dates from the occupation of the villa.

9. An unmistakable site on a slope $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles S.E. of Appleshaw Church and little more than half-a-mile from the Clanville

house, unexplored, but well-marked by litter of stone roof-slabs, flue-tile, etc.

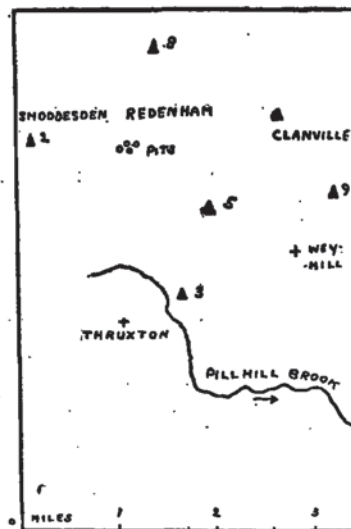
There is not always an obvious explanation of such grouping together of Roman houses. The late Mr. George Fox, a master of the subject, always maintained that the average villa was primarily a farm. It is possible that a *consortium* may have been formed in a district for the growing and marketing of corn, of which we know there was a considerable exportation from Britain, e.g., in A.D. 360, to relieve a famine in Gaul. The crossing of two trunk roads hard by, just N. of Andover, would have simplified transport. But this upland country-side, besides other amenities, offered the eminent one of an easy water-supply. It is noticeable that no well, to my knowledge, has been found on any one of the enumerated sites. The reason seems to be that sixteen centuries ago when the water level, as proved by Pitt-Rivers and others, stood 50 to 60 feet higher than now, our upland valleys had each its perennial rivulet of pure water, represented to-day by the occasional flow of our "winterbournes" or intermittent streams. One such, of large volume, in my own experience broke out two or three times immediately under the Biddesden site, and flowed through the usually dry village of Appleshaw and close to the pewter-field house.

Houses (1) and (3) and another not far away, in Castle Field, Andover, were built on the peristyle plan round an open colonnaded courtyard, as is evident from the remaining rows of pillar-bases. Of houses (6) and (8) and those unexplored we have no plans, but it seems that we may have here a group of houses built at the outset in the Southern Continental fashion which, as elsewhere, proved unsuitable in the climate of Britain and necessitated reconstruction, as at Clanville, where six of the twelve bases had been built over and the house re-fashioned to the enclosed or corridor type.

The Clanville house had been burnt and a traditional avoidance of the spot after dark perhaps preserved the memory of a catastrophic ending. At Thruxton five skeletons, lying in different attitudes recall those similarly found in the burnt villa at Llantwit Major, Glamorgan. The hurried concealment of the pewter dinner-service and the money tells the same story. We may imagine a simultaneous overthrow of the whole group of dwellings by some marauding band which may have harried its way up the Test Valley.

In or about the year 1896 the widening of the M. & S.W. railway disclosed in the low chalk cutting, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles N.W. of Weyhill Station and opposite to the Redenham Lodge, a series of bee-hive shaped pits (Plates II and III), which could easily be

examined as they were revealed in section under the navvies' tools. They were symmetrically cut, with smooth floors, and measured from three to four feet in depth, below the nine inches of humus, and from four to seven feet in diameter of floor. Two, emptied in my absence by the then tenant of Redenham, contained a crouched skeleton and three chalk loom-weights. The rest, examined by Lt.-Col. Hawley and myself, yielded a vast number of burnt flints or "pot-boilers," a few rough flint flakes, one or two objects of bone, none of metal, and a little pottery. The sherds were of a character quite unknown to me. I kept them for some 25 years, and last year matched them exactly with Mrs. M. E. Cunningham's Early Iron Age or Hallstatt pottery from All Cannings Cross, N. Wilts (*Antiquaries' Journal*, Jan., 1922). The work on the railway touched only the outer, Eastern fringe of the pit-area, the circular depressions of which could be seen extending over a large stretch of arable land W. of the line. I was shown, but could not obtain a remarkably fine bronze brooch of the La Tène I. type found at Shoddesden, quite near to the pit-field. I would urge the full investigation of this site: none has a better promise of increased knowledge of a little-known period in this country.



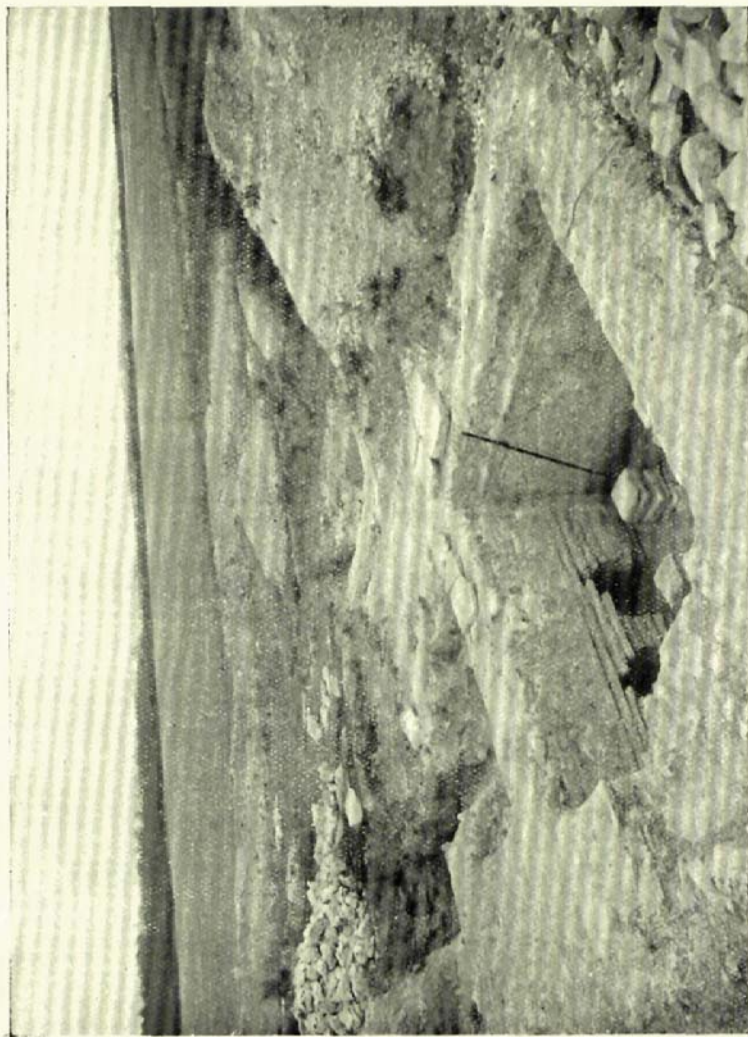


PLATE I. HYPOCAUST STRUCTURE OF THE HEATED ROOM OF THE DETACHED BATH-HOUSE, SITE NO. 5.

The height of the suspended floor (destroyed) is indicated by the ledge against which the bar rests. The hot air passed from the furnace, below the flint-heap on the left, under the bath jacketed with fire-tiles and through the double arch to the hypocaust.]

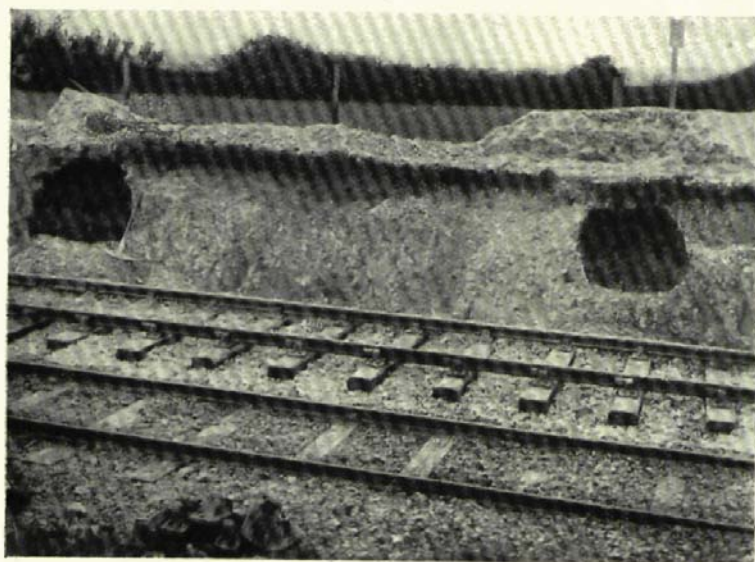


PLATE II.
PITS AT REDENHAM.

[To face page 218]



PLATE III.
PITS AT REDENHAM.

[To face page 219]